

Message Text

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TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 333 - JUNE 8, 1977

1. ISRAEL. A DMC OFFICIAL RECENTLY TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT THE ATMOSPHERE IN HIS PARTY HAS TURNED AGAINST JOINING A LIKUD-LED COALITION. HE THOUGHT THAT THE DAYAN APPOINTMENT MARKED THE TURNING POINT BUT ALSO THAT BEGIN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE TALKS WAS A FACTOR. BEGIN --ABSENT FROM THE EARLY SESSIONS--HAD INTRODUCED RIGIDITY IN THE LIKUD'S NEGOTIATING STANCE, THE OFFICIALS SAID. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

2. EGYPT. IN ANTICIPATION OF THIS WEEKEND'S MEETING BETWEEN GROMYKO AND FAHMY, THE EGYPTIANS APPEAR TO BE ADOPTING A MORE FRIENDLY ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SOVIETS. THIS CHANGE IN ATTITUDE PROBABLY REFLECTS A GROWING BELIEF AMONG EGYPTIAN LEADERS THAT THEY MUST MAINTAIN APPARENTLY HAS BEEN ARGUING THIS LINE FOR SOME TIME.

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3. SADAT, UNTIL RECENTLY, HAD REJECTED THE FAHMY ARGUMENT. THE PRESIDENT APPEARS TO HAVE OPPOSED A WARMING OF SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS BECAUSE HE FELT THAT SOVIETS WANTED HIS DOWNFALL. NEVERTHELESS, SADAT SEEMS TO HAVE CHANGED HIS OPINION. OVER THE WEEKEND, HE STATED PUBLICLY THAT EGYPT DOES NOT WANT A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH ANY STATE--INCLUDING BOTH THE SOVIET UNION AND THE US. ON THE OTHER

HAND, SADAT SAID THAT EGYPT WANTED FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH ALL STATES.

4. THE EGYPTIANS ALSO SEEM AWARE THAT THEY WERE THE ONES WHO BROKE WITH THE SOVIETS; THEREFORE, CAIRO MUST MAKE SOME CONCILIATORY GESTURE TOWARD MOSCOW. SADAT, HOWEVER, IS NOT PREPARED TO ADMIT PERSONAL ERROR FOR THE LONG PERIOD OF COOL SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS. YESTERDAY, HE BLAMED THE ERA OF BAD RELATIONS ON PODGORNY AND EXPRESSED SATISFACTION AT THE LATTER'S REMOVAL. THE EGYPTIAN PARTICULARLY NOTED THAT PODGORNY HAD MALIGNED THE EGYPTIAN ARMED FORCES JUST PRIOR TO THE OCTOBER WAR. SADAT'S STATEMENTS MAY BE DESIGNED TO FIND A FACE-SAVING WAY FOR EGYPT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW AND CAST HIMSELF IN THE ROLE OF DEFENDER OF THE EGYPTIAN ARMY.

5. THIS APPARENT ABOUT-FACE HAS EVOLVED SINCE SADAT'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON AND BEGIN'S ELECTORAL VICTORY. SADAT'S POLICY OF RELYING ON THE US HAS BEGUN TO COME UNDER INCREASING CRITICISM AT HOME. ONE ARGUMENT IS THAT BEGIN'S VICTORY MAKES THE PROSPECT OF WAR MORE LIKELY AND THAT, AS THE US IS UNLIKELY TO SUPPLY SUFFICIENT ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT FOR THE EGYPTIAN ARMED FORCES, CAIRO MUST REESTABLISH ITS SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH MOSCOW. OTHER LOCAL OBSERVERS ASSERT THAT, SINCE CAIRO IS "IN THE AMERICAN POCKET", THE US NOW CONSIDERS ASSAD THE PRIMARY ACTOR ON THE ARAB SIDE. THUS, TO OFFSET WASHINGTON'S TAKING CAIRO FOR GRANTED, THE EGYPTIANS MUST PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND THE AMERICANS.

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6. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY CAIRO, THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT HAS ISSUED A DECREE FORMALLY ESTABLISHING A SENIOR-LEVEL COMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY PRIME MINISTER SALIM, TO OVERSEE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EGYPT'S "OPEN DOOR" ECONOMIC POLICY. THE EMBASSY COMMENTED THAT THE DECREE GIVES THE COMMITTEE A SWEEPING MANDATE. IN AN EFFORT TO BRING EGYPT'S SLOW BUREAUCRACY INTO LINE, THE MANDATE ADMONISHES ALL MINISTRIES TO ABIDE BY AND CARRY OUT THE COMMITTEE'S DECISIONS. (SECRET)

7. LEBANON. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT SYRIA AND SARKIS ARE CLOSE TO WORKING OUT AN AGREEMENT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORDS. A PRO-SYRIAN NEWSPAPER SAID THAT SYRIAN FORCES WOULD ENTER THE CAMPS TO PROTECT THE PALESTINIANS FROM ISRAELI ATTACK. THE PRESS ALSO INDICATED THAT WHEN THE SYRIAN CONTINGENT OF THE ARAB SECURITY FORCE IS WITHDRAWN FROM LEBANON, SYRIAN ELEMENTS WILL REMAIN IN THE CAMPS. KHADDAM IS TO VISIT

BEIRUT TODAY IN ORDER TO DISCUSS THE SOLUTION WITH SARKIS.

8. SUCH A SOLUTION IS UNLIKELY TO SATISFY EITHER THE LEBANESE NATIONALISTS OR THE PALESTINIANS. FOR THE LEBANESE, THEY WOULD BE PERMANENTLY RECOGNIZING SYRIAN CONTROL OVER SOVEREIGN LEBANESE TERRITORY. THEY WOULD, IN LEBANESE NATIONALISTS' EYES, BE MERELY SUBSTITUTING SYRIAN PERMANENT OCCUPATION FOR PALESTINIAN OCCUPATION. THEY ARE, THEREFORE, LIKELY TO INSIST THAT ALL SYRIANS MUST WITHDRAW WHEN REQUESTED TO DO SO BY LEBANESE AUTHORITIES. FOR THE PALESTINIANS, THE PROSPECT OF SYRIAN CONTROL OF THEIR ACTIVITIES IS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE. IN SOUTH LEBANON, REJECTIONIST ELEMENTS ARE STILL REFUSING TO ALLOW PRO-SYRIAN PALESTINIANS, LET ALONE SYRIAN REGULARS, TO ENTER THE CAMPS NEAR TYRE. (SECRET)

9. SAUDI ARABIA. A PRELIMINARY REPORT HAS CONFIRMED
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A FIRE LAST SATURDAY IN THE GHAWAR FIELD NEAR ABQAIQ, WHERE A FIRE BROKE OUT ON MAY 11. IT ALSO HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT A PIPELINE NEAR SHEDGUM HAS RUPTURED, PRESUMABLY AS A RESULT OF THE LATEST FIRE, AND A FIRE BROKE OUT THERE AS WELL.

10. THE FIRE APPARENTLY STARTED WHEN A PICKUP TRUCK DROVE INTO THE AREA AND EXHAUST FUMES FROM THE VEHICLE IGNITED GASES. THERE IS NO INFORMATION ON THE EXTENT OF THE FIRE OR DAMAGE, ALTHOUGH SOME 20 PEOPLE REPORTEDLY WERE INJURED BY THE FIRE, INCLUDING AT LEAST TWO SERIOUSLY. THERE ARE NO REPORTS THAT US CITIZENS WERE AMONG THE INJURED. THE AREAS WHERE THE FIRES HAVE BEEN REPORTED ARE IN GHAWAR FIELD, SOME 80 KILOMETERS SOUTH OF DHAHRAN. THE REMOTENESS OF THE AREA WILL DELAY ACCURATE DAMAGE REPORTS. (CONFIDENTIAL)

11. MOROCCO. MOROCCO'S SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTION IN ZAIRE WILL TEMPORARILY ENHANCE KING HASSAN'S PRESTIGE AT HOME. IT MAY ALSO HELP SOLIDIFY DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT FROM AFRICAN MODERATES FOR MOROCCO IN ITS CONTINUING DISPUTE WITH ALGERIA OVER WESTERN SAHARA. THE MOROCCAN SUCCESS IN PUSHING BACK THE KATANGAN EXILES WHO INVADDED ZAIRE'S SHABA REGION WILL APPEAL TO MANY MOROCCANS, WHO

TRADITIONALLY REGARD THEMSELVES AS WARRIORS. THE TRIUMPHANT RETURN BY MID-JUNE OF THE MOROCCAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE WILL ALSO PROVIDE A BADLY NEEDED BOOST FOR THE MOROCCAN MILITARY, WHICH HAS HAD CHRONIC MORALE PROBLEMS BECAUSE OF THE CONTINUING GUERRILLA WAR IN WESTERN SAHARA.

12. HASSAN'S DECISION TO INTERVENE IN ZAIRE, HOWEVER, WAS NOT STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY A MAJORITY OF INFORMED MOROCCANS. IN ADDITION, THE OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES WERE INITIALLY STUNNED BY THE KING'S DECISION, WHICH WAS
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MADE IN ISOLATION AND COMPLETE SECRECY. THE SUBSEQUENT LACK OF EDITORIAL COMMENT IN PARTY NEWSPAPERS HAS INDICATED CONTINUING DOUBTS AMONG INFORMED MOROCCANS ABOUT THE WISDOM OF SUCH A VENTURE. THESE POLITICALLY AWARE MOROCCANS ARE PROBABLY MORE RELIEVED THAN JUBILANT OVER THE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME.

13. HASSAN HOPES HIS SOLIDARITY WITH ZAIRE WILL ELICIT FROM OTHER AFRICAN MODERATES STRONGER SUPPORT FOR HIS POSITION IN THE WESTERN SAHARA DISPUTE. HE MAY ALSO HOPE THE MOROCCAN SUCCESS IN ZAIRE WILL ENCOURAGE THE MODERATE AFRICANS IN THE OAU TO PLAY A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN COUNTERING RADICAL AND SOVIET INFLUENCE IN AFRICA. (CONFIDENTIAL)

14. TUNISIA-LIBYA. TUNISIA IS TAKING A MORE CONCILIATORY APPROACH IN ITS DISPUTE WITH LIBYA OVER THE CONTINENTAL SHELF IN THE GULF OF GABES. THE TUNISIANS PRESUMABLY HOPE THAT THIS TACK WILL ENCOURAGE LIBYA TO SUSPEND ITS PLANNED DRILLING OPERATIONS IN THE CONTESTED ZONE AND CREATE A MORE FAVORABLE CLIMATE FOR NEGOTIATIONS. A US-OWNED DRILLING SHIP UNDER CONTRACT TO THE LIBYAN NATIONAL OIL COMPANY HAS BEEN IN THE DISPUTED WATERS FOR MORE THAN A WEEK.

15. LIBYAN PRESIDENT QADHAFI IN A SPEECH LAST THURSDAY PROMISED NOT TO USE FORCE AGAINST AN ARAB NEIGHBOR AND EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN NEGOTIATING THE SHELF DISPUTE. IN CONTRAST TO HIS PREVIOUS TOUGH POSTURING, TUNISIAN PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA MET WITH THE LIBYA HIGH COMMISSIONER ON SATURDAY TO REITERATE HIS WILLINGNESS TO RESOLVE THE DISPUTE PEACEFULLY. ACCORDING TO A TUNISIAN RADIO BROADCAST, BOURGUIBA TOLD THE LIBYAN DIPLOMAT THAT QADHAFI'S SPEECH WAS A POSITIVE GESTURE AND THAT TUNISIA WOULD RECIPROCATATE. THE LIBYAN SUBSEQUENTLY CHARACTERIZED HIS SESSION WITH BOURGUIBA AS POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE.

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16. THE TUNISIANS ARE PORTRAYING QADHAFI'S SPEECH IN THE

MOST FAVORABLE LIGHT AND MAY BE UNDULY OPTIMISTIC.

THEY CHOSE TO IGNORE THE PORTION OF THE SPEECH IN WHICH QADHAFI SAID THE DISPUTE COULD ALSO BE RESOLVED IF TUNISIA SIMPLY MERGED WITH LIBYA. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN STRAINED EVER SINCE TUNISIA REFUSED TO IMPLEMENT A UNION AGREEMENT IN 1974. PRIOR TO ANY NEGOTIATIONS, THE TUNISIANS WILL WANT THE US DRILLING SHIP TO LEAVE THE CONTESTED ZONE. LIBYA, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN INSISTING THAT THE DRILLING OPERATION PROCEED REGARDLESS OF NEGOTIATIONS. (CONFIDENTIAL) VANCE

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